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CRUCIFIXION:

A

POETICAL ESSAY.

By THOMAS ZOUCH, M.A.

FELLOW of TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

CAMBRIDGE:

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M.DCC.LXV.

CRUCIATION

POETICAL ESSAY

BY THOMAS EDWARDS
FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE



A Clause of Mr. SEATON's Will,
Dated Oct. 8. 1738.

I Give my Kissingbury Estate to the University of Cambridge for ever: the Rents of which shall be disposed of yearly by the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, as he the Vice-Chancellor, the Master of Clare-Hall, and the Greek Professor for the time being; or any two of them shall agree. Which three persons aforesaid shall give out a Subject, which Subject shall for the first year be one or other of the Perfections or Attributes of the Supreme Being, and so the succeeding Years, till the Subject is exhausted; and afterwards the Subject shall be either Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell, Purity of Heart, &c. or whatever else may be judged by the Vice-Chancellor, Master of Clare-Hall, and Greek Professor, to be most conducive to the honour of the Supreme Being and recommendation of Virtue. And they shall yearly dispose of the Rent of the above Estate to that Master of Arts, whose Poem on the Subject given shall be best approved by them. Which Poem I ordain to be always in English, and to be printed; the expence of which shall be deducted out of the product of the Estate, and the residue given as a reward for the Composer of the Poem, or Ode, or Copy of Verses.

WE the underwritten, do assign Mr. SEATON's Reward to T. ZOUCHE, M.A. for his Poem on the CRUCIFIXION; and direct the said Poem to be printed, according to the Tenor of the Will.

October 9.
1765.

J. Barnardiston, Vice-Chancellor.
P. S. Goddard, Master of Clare-Hall.
M. Lort, Greek Professor.

THE
CRUCIFIXION:

A
POETICAL ESSAY.

ENOUGH hath fiction's fairy scene deceiv'd
My dreaming hours of youth: with pensive step
Musing along the cloyster's silent gloom
Thee, Holy Truth, I woo: thy graceful charms
Far lovelier than the damask rose that glows
On beauty's cheek, the poet's moral strain

Excite,

Excite. — Ye fabled songs adieu! adieu
Imagination, to the dazzled eye
Shooting thy gorgeous phantoms! hence, ye dreams
Of sublunary glare, the gem of wealth,
The plume of honour! To her awful shrine
Devotion wafts me, where the white-rob'd priest
With heart-felt transport on the wing of prayer
Extatic rises, or with waving hand
And all the decent elegance of ease
Mysterious truth unfolds, whilst on his tongue
Attention hangs enraptur'd. At that altar
Peace sheds her balmy influence, far from Guilt
And all his hideous offspring: Envy wan
With jaundic'd eye: Ambition's blustering voice
Brawling for titles: hollow-hearted smile
Of cringing Adulation: dog-ey'd Lust
Rifling the bosom of chaste innocence.

For say, can fancy, fond to weave the tale
Of bliss ideal, feign more genuine joy
Than thine, Philander, when the Man of God
Gives to thy hand the consecrated cup,
Blessed memorial of a Saviour's love!

Glowing

A POETICAL ESSAY.

7

Glowing with zeal the humble Penitent
 Approacheth: Faith her fostering radiance points
 Full on his contrite heart: Hope cheers his steps,
 And Charity, the fairest in the train
 Of christian virtues, swells his heaving breast
 With love unbounded. Feast of bliss supreme
 To eat the bread of life, to drink the cup
 Of benediction! — Memory bids the scene,
 Th' important scene, arise, when dread dismay
 Alarm'd the nations. Melt, thou heart of brass:
 Death triumph'd o'er its victor. Wild amaze
 Seiz'd all the host of heaven, moaning their God
 In agony transfixt, his every sense
 A window to affliction: sorrow fill'd
 Their tide of tragic woe, and chang'd the note
 From fervent rapture to the gloomy strain
 Of deepest lamentation. O how pure
 Th' effulgence of his bounty, that completes
 Redemption's mighty work, the source of joy!

Hail heavenly Love, that with eternal sway
 Pervades creation's amplest bounds! 'Twas Love
 That bade existence spring to life: the sun,

Inspher'd

Inspher'd in radiancy, began his course,
And vegetation from the earth's warm lap
Call'd forth her genial powers. 'Twas Love that form'd
Redemption's glorious plan. Ye white-wing'd hosts,
Cherubs and seraphs, that enrob'd in light
Drink the pure stream of ever-during day,
In hallelujahs chaunt the grateful hymn
Of adoration: from your sapphire seats
Hail the glad tidings, that to Man is giv'n
A Saviour merciful. But chiefly ye,
Daughters and sons of Adam, raise the song
Of gratulation meet. — Ye young, ye gay,
Listen with patient ear the strains of truth;
Ye who in dissipation waste your days,
From Pleasure's giddy train O steal an hour,
With sage reflexion nor disdain to gaze
The solemn scene on Calv'ry's guilty mount,
Where frightened nature shakes her trembling frame,
And shudders at the complicated crime
Of deicide. — The thorn-encircled head
All pale and languid on the bleeding cross,
The nail-empierced hand, the mangled feet,

The

The perforated side, the heaving sigh
Of gushing anguish, the deep groan of death,
The day of darkness, terror and distress :
Ah! shall not these awake one serious thought?

Sin, I detest thee: murd'rous child of night,
Hence to thy native hell! in Eden's vale
Rov'd our first parents, bosom'd in content,
Gay as the spring, and innocent as gay.
Thou dash'd their draught of bliss, their sweets of joy
Mingling with gall. Misfortune's haggard crew
Hence o'er the wide creation ruthless prowld,
And rioted on man. Can aught arrest
Th' Almighty's anger? — Yes: the victim bleeds,
His own dear Son, from bondage to exalt
A ransom'd world, to blast the damning power
Of Satan, Sin, and Death. How chang'd from him,
Whose Majesty in native lustre shone
Sevenfold, when on th' eternal throne he smil'd,
Long e're yon planets in their measur'd Orbs
Revolv'd: or walking on the whirl-wind's wing
He rais'd his arm, and drove the rebel brood
Down to their black abyss: beneath his feet

The flames flash'd horrible: before him fled
The ghastly train of pestilence and woe.

On Revelation's sacred page intent
The eye of faith surveys the mighty deed
Shadow'd in mystic type, when Abram urg'd
By heaven's all-wise behest, with eager zeal
Snatch'd from a mother's weeping care * the child
Of laughter, on Moriah's secret top
Binding the spotless hands of innocence.

How vain the breath, how empty all the boast
Of popular applause? to day we soar
The sons of fortune, favour'd by the croud
Their idol and their God. The morrow blights
Our bud of fame. The rabble change their notes
From hoarsest acclamation to the hiss
Of harsh contempt: the many-headed beast
Hark how he shouts for blood and impious carnage!
See Israel's humble King, mild as the lamb
Beneath the murdering knife, amidst the sneer
The taunt of mad reproach, led to the cross,
To shame and bitter death. Him late they rais'd

* *Ἰσαὰκ ἀριστὸς ἐκτίσθη.* Gen. xxi. 3. Buxtorf.

To fame's bright summit, when they sung his name
With loud hosannas, or with silent ardor
Dwelt on his tongue, list'ning the happy lore
Of evangelic joy. Ye ruffian tribe
Ah! check the ruthless Rage, that drowns the voice,
The faithful voice of reason, to your God
Prefers sedition's son, whom foul with crimes
Ripe vengeance waits, and awful justice calls.

Ye men of Judah, let one languid spark
Of soft compassion melt your iron hearts!
O stay the cruel stroke, the blood-stain'd scourge
Forbear: O spare, for pity spare that wound:
Support his falt'ring steps: he faints, he dies:
Your King, your meek Messiah faints: he sinks
Beneath th' oppressive load; up the steep mount
He toils panting, and harra's'd with fatigue.

But shall oblivion's raven wing o'ershade
The ever-blooming fame of Salem's daughters?
Then weep, ye fair, and with prophetic tears
Swell the full stream of Grief, sincere as erst
When Herod's vengeful arm in infant blood
Drench'd his wide-wasting sword: with rueful shriek

The childless parent wander'd Rama's streets.
Your gentler breasts to sympathetic sighs
Indulgent nature melts. Remorseless Man
With heart of roughest mold sheds not one tear,
Nor wails a Saviour's death. To you the Muse
Shall twine her wreath of praise: ye felt his pangs,
Ye moan'd his agonizing grief of Soul.

How calm the Sufferer! not one rageful word
Of wild impatience: no resentment shakes
His harrow'd breast. Cheerful and mild he meets
The savage king of terrors. Lo! to Heaven
On mental wing his zealous prayer ascends.
But ah! for whom? — for you, ye sons of pride
That led him to th' accurs'd tree of shame.
“Father, forgive them.” — Hence, far hence the fury
Of wrath and vengeful hatred! christian Love,
With universal Charity inspire
My breast; extinguish every latent spark
Of low revenge. Give me to breathe the flame
Of tenderest affection, to sustain
Unruffled and serene the mean attacks
Of enmity and slander, Thus to tread

A Master's heavenly steps, like him, to bear
With patient mind insult and rash abuse
Be this my boasted glory, this my pride!

Great God of Truth, shall equal terrors fall
On innocence and guilt? the noon-tide ray
Mix with the midnight gloom? The Son of Man,
The great High Priest, harmless and undefil'd,
With impious ruffians numb'd, dies the death
Of unrelenting justice? fierce as Hell
Yon harden'd murd'rer breathes out his angry soul
In blasphemous defiance. Foul reproach
Flows from his venom tongue: avenging death
With tenfold darkness brooding, opes to view
Scenes of eternal pangs, where penal wrath
With unextinguishable fury burns.
Some chearful beam of Hope, some gleam of Heaven
Bursts on the brother of his crimes. He weeps:
Repentance darts into his convict heart
A ray of Peace. The rising arm of wrath
Drops the impending Thunder: mercy smiles
Benign. E'en tho' the blaze of guilt outglare
The scarlet's crimson hue, fair mercy sheds

Her

Her hoard of joy, and whitens every stain.

Come then, Repentance, with thy piercing ken
The dark recesses of my heart pervade :
Fill me with real sorrow : naught avails
The fable sackcloth, or the vain grimace
Of hypocritic pomp. When ghastly death
Hovers around my couch, it naught avails
To break the curtain'd slumber of the night
Counting the figur'd beads, to wear the hour
With repetition's empty Hymn, to grasp
The gilded Crucifix. — Fantastic rites
Of papal ignorance ! — All wrapt in grief,
Whilst youth with manhood's vigor nerves my limbs
The young blood circling in it's channel'd path,
I bend the suppliant knee : — " Father of Heaven,
" Father of mercies, snatch from ruin's gulph,
" Snatch me from sin." — Temptation spreads her lure
With meretricious art. Wanton desire,
Fierce as the waken'd fury of the deep
Riots : O for a faithful friendly hand
With pious art to guide the light-wing'd skiff,
And waft it from the tempest's boist'rous rage!

See

See 'midst the croud, that thronging round the hill
With mad discordant roar of barb'rous joy
Gape on the Cross, a self-convicted wretch
Shivering. Damp horror fills his guilty breast
With pungent throes. On his wide-rolling eye
Distraction frantic sits and black despair.
Accursed lust of gain, that steels the heart
'Gainst pity's soft emotions, breaks the tie
Of dear affection, plunges all the soul
In sin and woe! What for so poor a price,
Th' Affassin's hireling wages, to betray
A Saviour and a God! and with the kiss
Of friendship too! — Thou specious Man of blood,
Fly from thyself, thy bitterest deadliest foe.
Conscience with never-dying worm corrodes
Thy tortur'd bosom. — 'Tis the Lamb of God,
The blessed Jesus, whom thy treach'rous hand
Consigns to death: Heard'st thou that sigh of grief
That shook earth's tottering base? Saw'st thou those Limbs
Writhed with pain? 'Twas he that taught the word
Of Peace and Love, that stopp'd the horrid rage
Of dire disease, and from their gloomy cell

Call'd

Call'd out the silent dead. Th' expiring sigh
Again he heaves. Heard'st thou that cutting pang
Iscaiot! Go, whilst dumb amazement holds
The frozen multitude: cavern thy pelf,
Perfidious traitor. Vengeance, clad in blood,
Burning with rage, unsheathes her wasteful sword,
Pursues thy steps, and hunts thee down to death.

Whilst ruin bursts the Temple's inmost veil,
And 'midst surrounding scenes of horror roam
The grisly spectres, as at midnight hour;
Far from the pomp and pageantry of pride
Pilate sequester'd sits, the venal judge,
Corruption's slave, that gloated on the spoils
Of innocence oppressed. What avails
Or trophy'd blaze of power or gloss of wealth
To sooth the fever'd phrenzy of his soul?
He burns, as with a raging calenture,
Tortur'd by jarring passions. — Why that Look?
Those broken accents? Thou dark, dusky Man,
Say can his spotted skin the leopard change?
In vain thou seek'st the pillow of repose.
The noon-tide sun, velop'd in darkness dim,

His

His golden glory shrouds: But ah! what night
With darkness dim shall shroud thee from the eye,
The piercing eye of guilt? With impious hand
Profane not thus the limpid stream: not all
The ocean's wave can wash off that foul spot
Of murder. Heaven's vindictive justice reigns
Unbrib'd by wealth. E'en now thy anxious mind
Anticipates its fate. Destruction waits
Thy steps: the tyrant of imperial Rome
Drives thee to exile: in the desert Isle
Breathe to the taunting air thy doleful plaints.
Engender'd erst on pride and coward shame
The monster Suicide his influence dire
Sheds o'er thy melancholy-tinctur'd soul
Baleful. Go dash thee down the rocky steep
Or plunge into thy breast the thirsty sword
That pants for blood. — But lo! a different scene!
What tho' th' autumnal sickness stalks around,
What tho' the rage of noon-day pestilence
Slays her ten thousands; yet beneath the shade
Of Providence the good Man smiles secure
And undismay'd. As resolution firm

The lov'd Disciple stands, in manly grief
Silent. — Illustrious Saint! endear'd to him
Who knows the hidden secret thoughts of Man,
Friendship on thee her choicest treasures pour'd.
What heavenly transport to mix soul with soul
In liberal converse; to imbibe the words
Of blessed truth, from wisdom's mouth to catch
Instruction's sweetest lessons! — See thy King,
Thy Friend from his triumphant infamy
Looks down with condescension; deigns to crown
Thy holy fortitude. With filial care
His tender pledges guard: When age with snow
Shall sow thy temples, then shall visions bless
Thy nights; nor shall the envied wreath thy brow
Entwine, e're ruin raze these haughty walls;
E're the proud Roman eagle clap her wing
Hovering o'er Salem's desolated towers.

What pencil's glowing colours know to paint
A mother's deep distress? fast by the cross
With eyes and hands uplifted, wrap'd in woe
All motionless and mute, she views her Son,
Her God beneath the weight of others sins

Bow his afflicted head. Thus Eve, absorpt
In sorrow's trance, her darling offspring ey'd
Welt'ring in blood: expressive silence spoke
Her pangs of agony: the big-swoln tear
Burst down her cheek: around her beauteous form
The golden tresses flow'd in rude disorder,
Whilst Adam at her side in vain assay'd
Bland consolation. Secret grief o'erwhelms
Maria's throbbing breast. Now languor wan
Unnerves each sense: tender remembrance soon
Wakes in her soften'd heart the fond, fond scenes,
When sweet domestic peace confirm'd her bliss,
Shelter'd beneath a husband's faithful arm
From humbling infamy. Thrice happy pair!
They gently trod the flowery path of Life:
They ate the bread of temperance, round their board
Contentment laugh'd, blithe as a blooming bride.
Lull'd on her lap the infant God-head oft
Repos'd him weary. Tho' no trumpet's sound,
No host of cherubim his praise attun'd,
Maternal rapture on his lovely name
With fondness dwelt: ponder'd each pleasing sign

THE CRUCIFIXION:

Of future splendor. — Oh! what an awful change!
The rude wind tempests the bright dawn of hope.
Mute is the tongue of eloquence that aw'd
A list'ning multitude: languid the lips
That smil'd complacence round, and every grace
Gently diffus'd. Dim in its ghastly orb
The beaming eye of Majesty is sunk.

But tho' with adverse wind the gray storm lours,
Shall fullen discontent awake the voice
Of querulous despair? Thou second Eve,
O stop the falling tear: the sigh restrain.
And ye, selected flock, that scatter'd late
Fled from your Shepherd, from despondence raise
Your drooping hearts: resume the smile of joy.
Burst are the gates of Death: blunted the sting
Of Sin: Messiah mounts th' exalted car
Of triumph. As Elijah rapt of old
To Heaven, victorious o'er the murky grave,
He rises to the realms of endless day.

Thus when the infant Moon her circling sphere
Wheels o'er the Sun's broad disk; her shadow falls
On Earth's fair bosom: darkness chills the fields,

And

And dreary night invests the face of Heaven.
Reflected from the lake full many a star
Glimmers with feeble languor. India's sons
Affrighted in wild tumult rend the air.
Before his idol god with barb'rous shriek
The Brachman falls : when soon the eye of day
Darts his all-cheering radiance, from the gloom
Emerging. Joy invades the wondering croud,
And acclamation rushes from the tongue
Of thousands that around their blazing pile
Riot in antic dance and dissonant song.

Far from this earthly ball th' advent'rous Muse
Uplifted, dares to soar her aëry way
To where in immortality enthron'd
The great Redeemer sits at God's right hand.
No fond illusion cheats me, from this shell
Of clay, the soul to brighter climes aspires,
Nor seeks imagination's waxen wings
To speed her course. Almighty, infinite
The filial Godhead reigns : old Ocean flies
Affrighted at his awful nod, whilst Heaven

Bows

Bows trembling. Mercy's gentle attribute
Tempers his justice : he protects the poor
In needful hour of dearth, and from the dust
Raises the weeping penitent : his wrath
The blood of goats averts not, or the fat
Of costly hecatombs, or altar wreath'd
With clouds of incense, tho' in Phrygian mood
The laurel-nurtur'd priests their Pythic hymn
Attemper to the virgin choir, that chant
Their Doric harmony. Nor deigns he not
With pity's eye the contrite heart to view
And troubled spirit : purest sacrifice
By him accepted. . O emblazon wide
His Name, ye creatures that in Heaven, in Earth
Or in the wide sea breathe.

“ Dread Judge of all !

“ Anointed King ! Saviour of fallen Man !

“ All praise to Thee be given ! e're time began

“ Thou art, in thy unfathom'd essence vail'd

“ Immense. But still Perfection deign'd to bear

“ Th' infirmities of Man : th' Eternal dyed,

“ Th'

“ Th’ Almighty suffer’d woe. All Heaven beheld,
“ And hymn’d in admiration’s loudest notes
“ Thee crucify’d. Can aught of mortal song
“ Equal thy glory whilst on Earth? what tongue
“ The congregated wonders of thy life
“ Can speak? to Thee shall wisdom yield her palm
“ Of fame: in vain she boasts the letter’d art,
“ And all the mazy folly of the schools,
“ Socratic knowledge, or the Stag’rite’s pomp
“ Of idle speculation. King of kings,
“ O let thy bright example rouse the soul
“ To meek humility! great Intercessor,
“ Pour on thy meanest suppliant the boon
“ Of pardon and remission. Wean his mind
“ From earth-bred care. When the grim hand of Death
“ Shall snatch me weary to the darksome grave,
“ When the last trumpet’s sound shall shake this globe,
“ And desolation urn yon disorb’d worlds,
“ Oh smile forgiveness. At that awful hour
“ Propitious chase away the fears that fright
“ The fluttering soul, nor let thy blood in vain

“ Drop

“ Drop from the cross! the while may reason guide
“ My every wish! may true religion strew
“ Life’s varied path! ’Tis her’s to wipe the tear
“ From sorrow’s eye, to light the lamp of Hope,
“ From Revelation’s copious fount to pour
“ The streams of Comfort, Peace, and holy Love.”

F I N I S.